622 the post, by the law of 1895, unless he is owner of at least ten feddans. His appointment is usually preceded by rivalries which may turn into brawls, and followed by feuds that often end in death.

The *omda*, however, knows very well how to protect and even avenge himself, for he alone transmits information to the *maamûr*, and has sole charge of twenty or more night-watchmen (*ghaffirs*). Indeed, his chief duty is to ensure public security in the village and the surrounding country rather than to concern himself with improvements or with public health, to which he gives no more thought than those under him.

He represents his village district (*nahya*) before the *maamûr*, is responsible for any crimes committed in it which are reported, supports the *sarraf* in the business of tax-collecting, sees to the levy of men required for any given task, takes charge of the post and telephone, controls the carrying of arms, reports the outbreak of disease among people or cattle, and records births and deaths.

622 692 624 He is not paid by the Government, but apart from the value of the prestige attaching to his office, he has various privileges. He is exempt from taxation on five feddans, from forced labour, and from military service. This applies both to himself and to his sons. By custom, if not by right, the position of *omda* remains the privilege of one family. If the village is large and important, the *omda* is assisted by sheikhs, with whom he deliberates before giving his decisions. One of my pupils, the son of an *omda* in Upper Egypt, describes the procedure as follows: 'My father has 25 *ghaffirs* under his orders. From 5 p.m. to 5 a.m. they are on watch in the fields, with the exception of two who 622 692 remain on guard at the *omda's* house. If there is a trial, it is conducted thus: The *omda* sits down in his *montaza*, 695 or outer garden, with a few sheikhs (men of some age and responsibility). The two disputants appear, and each gives his explanation of the matter. The *omda* gives his judgment, and tries to reconcile them. If they are not content to abide by his decision, he locks them up in jail until the following day and then sends them to the *markaz* with two *ghaffirs*.'

[681]

622 692 An *omda* may imprison for 24 hours, and impose a fine up to 15 piastres. There is no town-hall in the village. The

181 is no question of strong and weak, rich and poor. Authority
183 and wealth count for nothing. Landowners know this,
578 and cannot take their pleasure of the village women.
562 More than one Bey has been murdered at his own door for seducing a village girl.

682 Murder and revenge among the fellaheen arise more
181 often from quick temper than from ill will; they are signs
152 of hot blood. But such outbursts do not last long, and resignation, being more habitual, is a far more noticeable characteristic.

[539] The following fellah proverbs are significant:
Patience moves mountains.
Patience costs nothing.
The patient man sees free.

'When God created all things', says Ka'b el Ahbar,
773 according to Maqrîzi, 'He gave each of them a companion. "I am going to Syria", said Reason. "I will come with you", said Rebellion. Poverty said "I am going to the Desert". "I'll come with you", said Health. "I am going to Egypt", said Plenty. "And I'll go at your side", said Resignation.'

181 Resignation is a word scarcely strong enough to describe
183 the servility and degradation which is imposed upon the fellaheen not so much by their poverty as by the unceasing pressure of their masters. The fellah acts like a child or a brute because he is treated like one. He knows nothing of the upper class which rules him except its hard exterior. It is often said that the fellaheen cannot understand an authority that is humane and appeals to their better instincts. This is true, but the reason is that they have been brought
[681] up to nothing but blows, fines, insults, and bullying, which have finally rendered them insensible.

I myself, before I understood the meaning of human dignity, used the same harshness towards them, so natural and inevitable did it seem.

That the fellah's sense of justice is corrupt, that he lacks frankness, confidence, and eagerness is true, but this is because no-one has done anything to teach him these qualities or to give him any moral encouragement.

It is also true that his work is done without pleasure, without devotion and without style, that he has no taste for doing a job well, that he lacks initiative and inventive-

212 ideas, for the literary language in which books and newspapers are written is unfamiliar to them (72).

184 The weakness and the sufferings of the fellaheen arise from their abysmal ignorance in a fast-progressing world. The revival which has just been described only accentuates their isolation and dependence.

178 At the same time, if within the mass no substantial changes can be recorded, outside it some progress may be seen, and inside there are some signs of future evolution.

There is a certain growth in the sense of social responsibility. Progressive Egypt is beginning to pay some attention to unprogressive Egypt, clumsily it may be, by fits and starts, and as yet more in theory than in practice, but at least with the desire to help those who cannot help themselves.

641 Today the fellah has legal rights. He is no longer sub-
466 ject to forced labour at the good pleasure of his masters.
671 There is a code of law, and judges to apply it. It is true that the fellah does not always know how to make use of this, but the law exists, where formerly there was no defence.

641 'To put an end to the cruelty of the pasha, to let the
636 fellah's wife and frightened child have what belongs to them', such was the work of Lord Cromer at the end of the nineteenth century (73). This High Commissioner, who gave much thought to the fellaheen, used all his power to obtain for them at least strict justice. The lash was made illegal, and
[651 taxes were fixed at reasonable rates and periods. The fellah
● 681] is no longer in constant terror of the *sarraf*. He knows
731] how much he has to pay, and realises that if his field has
661] suffered from flood, drought or fire, the tax is remitted. The venality of officials and the selfishness of big landowners often nullify the benefits of these measures. But they have their effect.

In 1912 Lord Cromer's successor, Lord Kitchener, also caused a law to be passed in favour of the fellah, whereby the dwelling of the small farmer, his necessary implements, two of his cattle and five feddans were exempt from seizure. To make the fellah's finances sounder and accustom him to some kind of system the same High Commissioner established Savings Banks in the villages, where the fellah was to
[453] keep his savings. This institution, perhaps because it was

8:Schaefer A-5 (1900-1901) 1904
MR13 Fellahin MR13.
Upper Egypt

51.

Ingratitude.

×539
● 681

Eṣ-ṣāḥib illi ba'azz el-'āt rabbēnâ,
minno gara 'ēb. Kābirna u-barrēnâ.
Kuturet 'iyūbo,
u-kull en-nās diryā-bo.
'abbaḥ, rikibna maṭāyâna, u-ḥallēnâ.

By the friend whom we brought up with the best of food,
By him evil was done. We were proud and did not punish him;
But his evil deeds increased,
And everybody heard of it.
He became insolent, so we mounted our camels and left him.

5. We relinquished the field of combat to him, rather than degrade ourselves by disputing with him.

8:Schaefer A-5 (1900-1901) 1904
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

×539 If thou couldst see the rings,
[301] As they sparkle in my ear,
Thou mightest carry the basket,
Without being open to blame!

1. As marriage between cousins is regarded as the most [582] natural thing (compare No. 87), hence ibnē 'ammi = "cousin" [605] (masc.) and bintē 'ammi = "cousin" (fem.) are quite common expressions for "dearest". Married couples often speak thus of one another, even though they may not be related.

4. Compare No. 110, l. 6.

[196] 5. The Jews are the most despised of all unbelievers and even more hated than the Christians.

7. They are not plainly visible until the veil is removed.

9. "Thou mightest carry the basket", namely: of debris [461] from the excavations, which work belongs to the boys. At [857] our work, it was always fun for the boys, when one of the [681] men, as a punishment, was obliged to take a basket and carry debris in it. Then scornful and contemptuous remarks were rained upon him.